

Rep. Schakowsky  
CMT Hearing – Nanotechnology  
Opening Statement  
July 29, 2014

Thank you, Chairman Terry, for holding today's important hearing on the issue of nanotechnology. I look forward to hearing from each of our accomplished witnesses about this exciting field.

I'd like to take this opportunity to introduce one of our witnesses, Dr. Milan Mrksich, a professor at my hometown Northwestern University and a leader in the field of nanotechnology. Dr. Mrksich has focused his research on biomedical advances that would not be possible without the development of nanotechnology. He has been involved in research that has made Chicago one of the premier destinations around the world for nanotechnology – from research and development on Northwestern's campus to the commercialization at the nearby Illinois Science and Technology Park and other sites. I look forward to gaining from his valuable perspective.

From real-time monitoring of critical infrastructure to water purification to more effective treatment of cancer, nanotechnology has the potential to solve some of the world's most important challenges. Few fields of scientific research have as much breadth or potential.

That being said, nanotechnology's impact on public health and our environment is not well-understood. Certain studies have

indicated potential hazards. For example, titanium dioxide nanoparticles, which are used in sunscreen to block UV light, can also kill microbes used to treat municipal water supplies. That is why we need to be careful to ensure that federal regulators responsible for public health and chemical exposure – from the EPA to FDA and the CPSC – coordinate efforts to better understand any possible toxicity of nanomaterials and protect the public from harmful impacts while enabling their beneficial use.

The United States recognized the promise of nanotechnology early on, and the National Nanotechnology Initiative has benefitted from nearly \$20 billion in federal investment since 2000. Other world leaders have followed suit, with more than \$70 billion in total global investment in nanotechnology over the same period.

The federal government must continue to play a lead role in supporting nanotechnology research and development. Last year, Congress appropriated \$1.5 billion for nanotechnology, more than 10 percent below the Administration's request. According to the GAO, some other nations may have already surpassed the U.S. in terms of public investment in nanotech, and we can be sure that those competitors will maintain significant investment in this promising field moving forward. Congress should commit to adequate support of cutting edge research, and I hope all of my colleagues will join in working to

increase National Nanotechnology Initiative funding moving forward.

We should focus on the areas of the nanotech pipeline that are most in need of additional support. There is a demonstrated lack of financing for nanotechnology as it moves from the development stage to the commercialization stage. I am concerned that without consistent and significant financial backing, the advancement of nanotechnology in this country could slow. We should work to ensure that promising technologies – especially those that can save and sustain lives – have the support needed to reach and benefit the public.

Again, I am excited about the promise nanotechnology holds for our country and the world. I look forward to hearing the perspectives of our witnesses today, especially about where we go from here. I yield back.